Middle Eastern Lives

The Practice of Biography and Self-Narrative

Edited by Martin Kramer

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Introduction

Martin Kramer

THE Middle East and the West are heirs to long traditions of recounting lives. In the ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean and west Asia, the stories of individuals were chiseled on friezes and triumphal arches, minted on coins, memorized as epic, and written down as chronicle. Although Christendom and Islam arose to proclaim the unlimited power of a single God, they made still more generous allowance for the role of the exemplary life in divine history. Both traditions rested upon individual responsibility before an indivisible God, who worked his will through the lives of prophets and kings, saints and warriors. Christians and Muslims differed over the precise manifestation of the divine presence, but they differed not at all in their search for guidance in the edifying lives of Jesus and Muhammad, the disciples and the companions, St. Augustine and Ghazali, Richard the Lionhearted and Saladin. Within both great traditions, the recording of lives became a specialization within the preservation of knowledge, and the recorders followed similar conventions of selection and narration. And in both traditions, the purpose of organizing the circumstances of a life was overwhelmingly didactic, to inspire and guide by example.

It was the West that discovered a new and revolutionary way of telling lives, at a time when, for many of the same reasons, the West was discovering much else that was new and revolu-

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tionary. What would become modern biography and autobiography differed from the old telling in their insistence on the intellectual and emotional distance of the teller from the subject—even when that subject was the self. These modern biographers sought evidence of human motive where their predecessors cited divine intervention. In the quest for knowing, they sought to penetrate those corners of lives left unexplored by the traditional edifiers and hagiographers.

This distancing ultimately made biography one of the grandest spires of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century historiography and established introspective autobiography as a major form of literary expression. In the past hundred years, recorded lives achieved a cultural ideal in form and proportion, an ideal preserved to this day in many biographies and autobiographies. Narrative proceeds in some chronological relationship to the lived life. It draws on the public document and the private diary to weave a coherent story, in which the subject always occupies center stage. Bolder narratives, influenced primarily by psychoanalysis and the modern novel, seek to reconstruct perception and hidden motive, of others and the self. And the narrative champions fullness as the highest virtue, so that a biography, to approach truth, must be comprehensive. Its proportions must evoke the creative (or destructive) energy generated by a lived life.

But this revolution in the telling of lives did not sweep the Muslim societies of the Middle East. Muslims immediately associated intellectual distance with disbelief, for they were introduced to the methods of modern biography largely by Orientalists, who applied them to the edifying lives of the Islamic tradition, and especially the life of the Prophet Muham-

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mad.[1] In the nineteenth century, Muslim opinion became much exercised over the subjection of Muhammad's life and other exemplary Muslim lives to the critical methods of Western biographers. Some in the Middle East, battered by the political and cultural expansion of the West, rejected the desacralization of their history, as they have done in our own time by their condemnation of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. To make sacred lives the subject of critical biography was to commit a sacrilege. The situation did not differ much among those who substituted the creed of nationalism for the religion of Islam. Nationalism, too, edified through the telling of exemplary lives and created its own personality cults. And so the writing of Middle Eastern lives in the Middle East largely followed the methodological and intellectual ground rules of traditional and uncritical narration. The same held true for self-narration, which was either devoid of introspection or more like memoir than autobiography.

Orientalism and "New" History

The first initiatives in applying critical methods to Middle Eastern lives originated largely from outside the region. Even these were slow in coming, for a subtle bias against biography ran through the Orientalist tradition. Whereas the "old" historian of Europe respected and even exalted the causal role of the individual, the Orientalist insisted on the primacy of culture as expressed in language and religion. Compelling history was not the doings of rulers and their dynasties, although Orientalists did much to establish the chronology of Islamic history and to translate chronicles. Compelling history was cultural history—the history of religion, philosophy, and literature—

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which evidenced change over time, often through the influences of other cultures. Orientalists therefore produced a very limited corpus of biography. Studies of towering figures were compiled, including the biographies of the Prophet that Muslims found offensive, but the Orientalist history of Islam was largely the history of a religious community, in which the individual was rarely accorded the full autonomy attributed to the individual Westerner.

Nor did the Orientalists receive encouragement from the example of the "new" history as it emerged early in this century. The "new" historians of Europe had little use for biography once they had shifted the territory of historical inquiry from elite to mass, from politics to society. Vast segments of society had been excluded from the "old" history, even of Europe. The "new" historian sought evidence for the driving forces of change in villages and town marketplaces, not in courts and palaces. Change itself originated not in the action or inaction of rulers or a ruling elite but in economic, demographic, and ecological forces that unfolded over long durations of time. These constituted the fundamental tiers on which human history rested—so deep and vast that only a total vision of history could encompass them in its sweep. The biography of the "great man" in the nineteenth-century tradition did not disappear, but it was undertaken increasingly by nonprofessional historians who wrote for general audiences. Academic historians questioned not only the utility of biography but its very legitimacy.

When historiography's European revolution occurred, it led the historiography of the Middle East almost directly from Orientalism to "new" history. The transformation was swiftest

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in France. There the domineering figure of Louis Massignon personified the metamorphosis of Orientalist into social and economic historian. Under the proximate influence of the *Annalistes,* he and other scholars, who had been formed in the tradition of Oriental studies, rushed straight into social and economic history. Maxime Rodinson, trained in philology, followed a similar progression to economic history, although under the rather different impetus of Marxist theory. French scholarship passed through no stage comparable to the "old" history, with its emphasis on politics and biography, but leapt, like Massignon and Rodinson, directly from philology and religion to the study of guilds and prices. When they paused to study individual lives—Massignon that of Hallaj, Rodinson that of Muhammad—their quest was not for the unique but for the exemplary and edifying, although their criteria differed radically from those of Muslims.

In the English-speaking world, the transformation of Orientalist into "new" historian was not as dramatic. Yet the same leap was urged by the Orientalist Sir Hamilton Gibb, who argued that the next generation should devote its resources to social history. "It is vital to stress the word 'society,'" he wrote three decades ago, for "the nature and pressures of the internal social forces engaged have largely determined the working of [Middle Eastern] political structures."[2] The admonition did not go unheeded. In a comprehensive survey of Middle Eastern historiography published slightly more than a decade ago, the historian Albert Hourani announced that "social history seems likely to be the dominant mode of history writing for the present generation."[3] That generation borrowed theoretical models and methodologies first elaborated by the "new" historians

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of Europe, who had defined the concerns of social history when most Middle Eastern history still was being written by Orientalists. In recent years historians of the Middle East have produced the first studies to employ the paradigms of political economy, the "world-system," the *Annales* approach, and even deconstructionism. In the words of one "new" historian of the Middle East, the search is for a paradigm that "is able to describe the activities of the whole society as meaningful, and need not restrict itself to a narrative of political events and elite biography, disembodied from the rest of society."[4] Nothing in the work of the Orientalists ever quite approximated this avid depersonalization of Muslim society.

"It has been said that when ideas die in France, they are reborn in America," one eminent American historian has written. "One might add that when they are past their prime in other disciplines, they are belatedly adopted by historians."[5] And only after they have made their contributions to the history of Europe are they applied to the history of the Middle East. By the time the first "new" historians of the Middle East emerged, the general crisis of the "new" history—what one practitioner once called "history without people"—had already overtaken the field. The crisis grew from a disappointment with the yield of "total history" and doubts about the role of such history as a humanistic endeavor. Over the past decade, narrative history has been revived, and even biography has lost much of its stigma.

The crisis of the "new" history is just now being appreciated by historians of the Middle East. Their disillusionment is bound to be deeper, for in every instance the resort to the themes and methods of the "new" history has been less satis-

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factory for the Middle East than for Europe. The thinness of the sources and the complete absence of many social groups from the extant records has left the "new" history of the Middle East a pale shadow of its European models. The "thick description" that several historians have achieved for parts of premodern Europe can never be approximated for the Middle East. And so historians of the Middle East are becoming aware of the revaluation of biography as evidenced in the work of historians of Europe, the creation of new journals of biographical method, and the choice of biography as a theme of conferences held by advanced research institutes. There are signs of a new willingness among historians of the Middle East to see whether biography can produce a fuller and richer representation of the past. And there is a readiness to look again at self-narratives, in order to mine new insights from the texts.

Obstacles to Representation

Yet this new endeavor cannot but bring into relief the special problems of writing Middle Eastern lives, for it may be just as difficult to follow the lead of "new" biography on Middle Eastern ground as it was to follow the lead of "new" history.

The "new" biographer, like the "new" historian, cannot discount the dearth of intimate source materials. There are no comprehensive and accessible collections of private papers, no confidential diaries deposited for the scrutiny of all. Certainly there have always been sufficient sources for those seeking to write about one or another Middle Eastern writer, and many of those schooled in the strong Orientalist traditions of cultural and literary history contributed to what might be called intellectual biography or portraiture. Yet this writing was often

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disembodied, based narrowly on the works of the subjects themselves. There were too few intimate documents to surround public text with context. That there can be a wide discrepancy between the public and private persona of a Muslim intellectual we know from the successive lives of Sayyid Jamal al-Din "al-Afghani," reckoned as the precursor of the major Muslim ideological responses to the modern West. With each chance discovery of material—a file in the British Public Records Office, another in the French police archives, and finally some of his own papers in a Tehran library—it became clear how futile trying to assess Afghani's life solely through his own writings had been. No one can say how many lives of Muslim intellectuals might be turned over by the discovery of a trunk of letters. But these lives were not lived in Bloomsbury. Cairo, Damascus, Istanbul, Tehran—these cities insisted on conformity, in politics, literature, and art. An intellectual might dare to stretch these conventions but could never openly defy them. And so it is almost impossible to strip away the heavy layers of self-imposed censorship; in many instances, the absence of letters and diaries means that the private voice is forever lost.

The intimate sources for the lives of rulers and leaders remain even more inaccessible. There is nothing Middle Eastern about the desire of the powerful to erect defensive barriers between their personas and themselves, but the powerful of the Middle East sometimes have erected barriers so high as to be insurmountable, even decades later. "Political biography is essentially concerned with the interaction of personality and politics," one historian has written. "And personality, it is commonly supposed, is at least as much the product of private as of public experiences. How then are political biographies of

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Middle Eastern leaders possible? For their private lives are as secluded from public gaze as were the family lives of their fathers, secure behind the windowless outer walls of their dwellings. Syrian presidents disclose what they choose: in place of personalities they have personality cults."[6] Even when those cults die—usually superseded by the cult of a successor—the evidence for the lived life remains fragmentary or inaccessible.

As a consequence, some modern lives that occupied the center of history's canvas have never been told with documentary rigor. No documented biographies present the lives of Ottoman sultan Abdülhamid II and Qajar shah Nasir al-Din, the two rulers who dominated the Islamic world in which Afghani lived, and who reigned for thirty-three and forty-eight years, respectively. (A scholarly biography of Nasir al-Din is now in preparation.) There is no life of Faysal, the leader of the Arab revolt, ruler in Damascus, and then king in Baghdad. There are a number of biographies of their successors—of Egyptian and Syrian and Turkish presidents, of Iranian shahs and Arabian kings. But these works, when they are not journalistic, have been forced to rely on secondary sources because the intimate document is inaccessible. Sometimes interviews can offer compensation, but the intimate document is biography's adrenaline. If we know Herzl better than Abdülhamid II, Lawrence better than Faysal, Philby better than Ibn Saud, Eden better than Nasser, it is largely thanks to the rich texture of the sources. There is no substitute.

Or is there? All lives leave their documentary gaps; perhaps the documentary problem for the Middle East is one of degree rather than kind. Just as there cannot be total history, there cannot be total biography. All biography, like all history, is a

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grand compromise. One biographical strategy is to narrow the focus to questions suggested by the accessible evidence. This is the essence of "political biography," a life told with an explicit bias for politics and the kinds of available evidence that politics generates. Another strategy is to draw on some theory to infer a world of meaning from the broadest circumstances and anecdotal details of a life. This is the essence of "psychobiography," a life told through explicit inferences, guided by a more or less comprehensive theory of motive. Both of these approaches to biography are compromises: the first because of its willful omissions, the second because of its deliberate inferential leaps.

A great deal has been written and said about the problems raised by such compromises. Here it need only be noted that they are often greater for the biographer of a Middle Eastern subject. The political biographer may not have access to the private diary, but if the life of a subject was lived within the confines of a Western democracy, the public archives are probably copious and accessible. Yet in much of the Middle East and during most periods, politics have been conducted much like private life—behind high walls of secrecy, secure from all scrutiny. In what sense is the president of Syria, even after twenty years of rule, a "public man"? Is it not more accurate to say that he is Syria's most private man, whereas it is the citizens of Syria who are public men and women, who live their lives under the penetrating gaze reserved in the West for the politicians? The political biographer of the Middle Eastern leader is compelled to make not a few leaps of faith in trying to reconstruct the concealed dynamics of decisions for which the evidence is fragmentary at best.

In one sense, the compromise demanded of the psychobiog-

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rapher of a Middle Eastern subject is no greater than that demanded of any psychobiographer. For adherents of comprehensive theories, the inferential leaps built into theory are essentially the same regardless of cultural setting. Yet in practice, those leaps may be longer and more perilous for the psychobiographer of a Middle Eastern subject. At many times and in many places, the experience of private, family, and sexual life in the Middle East has differed radically from the kinds of experience that have driven theory in the West. And since so little has been done even to describe the range of experience in the Middle East, from palace life to tent life, it is difficult to determine just where the biases might lie. The distance of the leap is further lengthened by a certain sense of propriety and privacy common to most of the Middle East. This transforms self-revelation into a breach of collective integrity, makes women invisible, and constricts the flow of evidence.

But if the Middle Eastern setting of biography raises the obstacles, it also raises the incentives. For in the Middle East, almost as much as in Europe, this has been a century of "great men." The Middle East entered the century under the traditional authority of long-ruling sultans and shahs. After an imperial interlude, the charismatic authority of revolutionary heroes had its moment of (vain)glory. A decline in the apparent caliber of leaders occurred just after midcentury, when the Middle East became a cauldron of coups. Historians and social scientists had little cause to dwell on the many rulers who shuttled in and out of office during those years. The prize of these incessant struggles could scarcely be called power, since a growing dependence narrowed the base of resources—social, economic, military—that could support leader-driven change. But

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in the last two decades, new wealth has combined with new technologies of control to transform some Middle Eastern leaders into immovable strongmen.

With the collapse of the despotisms of Eastern Europe, the Middle East remains the last preserve of protracted individual rule. Syria's president has ruled for twenty years. Jordan's king has reigned for thirty-seven years. Libya's leader brought off his coup twenty years ago. The chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization has held his title for twenty years. Iraq's ruler helped to bring his party to power twenty years ago, and has ruled the country alone for ten years. Now that the means of control have been supplemented by the technologies of mass destruction, the "great men" loom large. Through cults of personality that they themselves promote, they have become the embodiments of entire states. Their enhanced stature, of course, is partly an illusion, a game of mirrors. The revolutions of Eastern Europe hang over the "great men" of the Middle East like a pall. But the recent history of some Middle Eastern polities is virtually inseparable from the choices and prejudices of a few men. For periods when strong leaders rule, as in Europe during the age of the dictators and in the Middle East today, biography becomes indispensable to history. And so it must be, unless or until Middle Eastern societies rise up to impose some limitation on ambition and personal power.

Competing Approaches

Reading and writing lives begin with careful listening to the voices of those who have lived them. Self-narrative in its various forms is the subject of the first two essays in this volume, by

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Bernard Lewis and Dale Eickelman, and of much of the third, by Marvin Zonis. Lewis considers the nature of the self-narratives that have figured in the literatures of the Middle East from ancient times to the present, with an emphasis on the Islamic tradition. His point is to demonstrate the continuous thread of self-narrative in these literatures and thus refute the argument that only under Western impact have Middle Easterners given accounts of their own lives. It is a point well taken: the past offers up numerous apologia, self-aggrandizing statements to posterity, and first-person accounts of religious awakening. Yet as Lewis points out, much of this material is of a fragmentary nature and contains little that might be described as introspective.

A question Lewis does not raise, but one that is inescapable, is whether this paucity of introspection is the product of culture. In his essay, Marvin Zonis goes further: noting the dearth of true autobiography in the Middle East, he argues that the retrospective assignment of meaning to a life, so essential to the production of introspective autobiography, is a product of Western historicism. Life experience is not integrated or understood as a variable fashioned by changing contexts; the lived life is understood as a series of discrete experiences. The predominant cultures of the Middle East, with their emphasis on communal values and identity, do not encourage an individualism essential to introspection. These cultural norms preclude more than true autobiography, since true biography also depends on the same sense of historicism and individualism. As Dale Eickelman suggests in his essay, this devaluation of individual will owes nothing to Islam and indeed would seem to

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stand in opposition to Islamic doctrine, which stresses personal responsibility and autonomy. But that doctrine has always been in tension with social values inherited from pre-Islam.

On all these points, Zonis enters controversial ground. The postulated inability to integrate a life's experience cannot but evoke those formulations about the atomism of Arab thought so attacked by the critics of Orientalism. The argument that communalism undervalues liberty and equality, and that the Middle Easterner understands only fraternity, has been made before. Yet the fact remains that very little self-narrative by Middle Easterners satisfies the criteria by which Westerners define true autobiography. If Middle Eastern self-narrative is thin, its thinness requires methodological strategies to compensate for the lacunae.

As Dale Eickelman demonstrates, the anthropologist can supplement the self-narrative by firsthand observation of the wider social context. Eickelman has studied the *tarjama,* highly stylized self-narrative or biography, of learned men in local settings in both Morocco and Oman. These texts show some evolution in form but remain almost rigidly stylized and selective, offering nothing in the way of introspection or accounting of motive. The texts serve above all to present the cultural personas of learned men: their social masks, put on for the benefit of a contemporary audience of initiates. The tarjamas exclude family context, peer learning, economic activity, and politics—precisely the subject matter sought by the anthropologist in the quest for contextual wholeness. As it happens, the tarjamas consulted by Eickelman are ambiguous about just those political issues that most interest him: the relationship of individual men of learning to French colonial rule in Morocco, and their

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attitude to the imamate in Oman. Such texts then are not self-contained, but once their context is established through direct observation, they become invaluable documents, not only for what they include, but just as often for what they omit. The marked discrepancies between what the tarjamas say about these learned men and what Eickelman has found out about them can only sober the historical biographer, who must rely solely on texts and recollections to reconstruct lives.

Eickelman's kind of "social biography" is not so much the reading of lives as it is reading between the lines of lives. And for some, it is not particular context but universal theory that coaxes the alternative readings from the texts. The second part of the essay by Marvin Zonis advocates the resort to psychological theory to illuminate what he calls the human "black box." His plea for psychopolitical studies is not precisely a plea for psychobiography: the psychopolitical study is in every instance the case study of an event, not a life, and depends just as much on group psychology. Yet certainly in the case chosen by Zonis, the fall of Iran's last shah, an abbreviated psychobiography is the inevitable prelude to the study itself.

Ultimately, then, any plea for psychopolitical studies is a plea for psychobiography. In the case of the Shah's fall, Zonis seeks to demonstrate how much can be added to an understanding of Iran's revolution by accounting for the Shah's own conduct—and how much more convincingly that conduct can be explained through psychoanalytic theory. Drawing particularly on the work of Heinz Kohut, Zonis maintains that "the Shah entered adult status with depleted narcissism, unable to provide himself with a level of self-esteem sufficient to allow the maintenance of a reasonable psychic equilibrium. Instead, he was

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totally dependent for his narcissistic nurturing on external sources." As it happened, each of those sources failed him as the revolution gathered steam, leaving him quite helpless to resist it. When personality becomes the pivot of explanation, so too does a theory of personality.

The difficulty, of course, is that theories of personality stir deep disagreements among theorists and evoke charges of determinism and reductionism among historians. Zonis argues for tolerance and a kind of suspension of judgment, but the warriors of theory take no prisoners. Vamik D. Volkan and Norman Itzkowitz, whose psychoanalytic biography *The Immortal Atatürk* evoked many hostile reactions, respond in kind to their critics. The assumption of their piece is that the "unending" argument over the validity of psychoanalysis cannot be resolved: "Let them have it how they will." More consequential for them are the objections of psychoanalysts to psychoanalytic biography, criticism made within the charmed circle of believers. For psychoanalysis is both a theory and a clinical technique that "brings the analyst and analysand together in a highly specific way." This interaction between analyst and analysand generates the very evidence on which the entire analysis rests. Not surprisingly, many psychoanalysts are uncomfortable with the application of their techniques of interpretation to dead, unanalyzed subjects. Volkan and Itzkowitz respond by showing how texts and interviews related to Atatürk can supply some of the information that would have been gained from an actual analysis of the Turkish leader. This information can interact usefully with theory, although they concede that "total biography" is impossible.

For Elie Kedourie, however, this attempt by psychobiogra-

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phers (and others) to hang their evidence on a shaky scaffold of theory—and then deduce what is hidden and missing—is self-delusion. Biography, like any historical account, "is wholly made up of pieces of evidence interlocking with other similar pieces without, so to speak, being forced. And if there is no evidence, then no concept can make up for its absence." For Kedourie, "there is nothing beyond or above or below the historical record (as the evidence shows it to be) which may serve to account for or to explain this record." The record is "its own explanation." Nor do the biographer and the subject need the mediation of theoretical decoding: mind is akin to mind, mind speaks to mind, mind can and does understand mind.

Kedourie's repudiation of the social sciences is a view that has few adherents among historians outside Britain. During the conference, the historian Saul Friedländer, who served as commentator, proposed the compromise of "limited models." But there would seem to be little middle ground on which a Kedourie and a Volkan or Itzkowitz might meet. Practically speaking, the debate over psychobiography has probably gone as far as it can go. Nothing done on the Middle East is likely to carry it much further.

The last two essays, one by a biographer, the other by a political historian, consider the relationship of biography to history. Compared to biographers of most Middle Eastern subjects, biographer Shabtai Teveth works in a very different medium, for writing the lives of the makers of Israel rests on introspective sources that are plentiful and accessible. Yet even here Teveth finds history and biography at odds. First, whereas history proclaims the primacy of evidence, biography is an art; it insists on a "blend of evidence and poetic licence." (Some

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contributors to this volume invoke theories of science to sanction inferential leaps; others claim the licenses of art—both for the same purpose.) Second, history and biography diverge in assignations of significance. The choice of biography is itself a selection, even an exclusion, that blue-pencils a question mark beside every digression of narrative into the wider context of events. Yet for biography to do credible service as history, it must draw the full-length portrait of its subject's life and the context of that life. (This may explain why biographies often run to such great length.) But if biography is indeed a "crime against history," as Teveth says, then it is certainly no more heinous than the offenses committed daily in the name of new theories and methods. Certainly Teveth's own study of Ben-Gurion qualifies as history, for the lived life is tightly interwoven with the dramatic events of the time. Yet biography's demands of style, proportion, and emphasis will doubtless continue to repel some historians, even as they attract ever-growing numbers of readers.

Uriel Dann contemplates the other side of the coin. Just how much biography can be usefully introduced into a political history? Quite a bit, Dann concludes, especially in the setting of the Middle East, where the "prevalence of a hero" makes insistent biographical demands on the political historian. Dann himself has always accepted the challenge; each of his political histories has turned on the axis of a central figure. Just how much biography is essential and how much is intrusive in political history is a matter of—well, plain common sense: "There is no ironclad definition of what is 'palpably trivial,' but we are expected, after all, to exercise some judgment." Theories and models notwithstanding, there is no substitute for sound judg-

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ment, a capacity for empathy, and a strong respect for evidence. This is not historical fundamentalism, but simply a reminder that all interpretation must rest on firm foundations.

The Promise of Biography

In a book full of pleas and admonitions, a general one in favor of the book's theme is not out of order. When done with sensitivity, the telling and reading of lives increase our empathy for people of other times, other places, other cultures. There are many other roads to other minds (history, language, literature), but few so resistant to the arid pedantry of overspecialization as biography. Biography allows scholars in warring disciplines to debate their differences on the neutral ground of a shared humanism, where no discipline enjoys a uniquely privileged position. And biography and autobiography are literary forms that are appreciated by general readers, including those in the wider world of scholarship, which is otherwise disconnected from the closed community of Middle Eastern studies and the Middle East itself.

It is for this last reason that biographers and students of self-narrative working in a Middle Eastern medium have an outside chance to move their wider disciplines. Since so many disciplines burned their bridges to biography and the analysis of self-narrative, the present work of reconstruction is still open to all. Students of the Middle East again might arrive on the scene too late, and with too little equipment. But those who are inspired by the riveting tension of Middle Eastern lives perhaps hold a key to the inspiration of others.

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Notes

Introduction

1. See Maxime Rodinson, "A Critical Survey of Modern Studies on Muhammad," in *Studies on Islam,* ed. and trans. Merlin L. Swartz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 23–85.

2. Hamilton A. R. Gibb, "Problems of Modern Middle Eastern History," in *Studies on the Civilization of Islam,* ed. Stanford J. Shaw and William R. Polk (1956; Boston: Beacon, 1962), 340–41.

3. Albert Hourani, "The Present State of Islamic and Middle Eastern Historiography," in *Europe and the Middle East* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 163, 191.

4. Peter Gran, "Political Economy as a Paradigm for the Study of Islamic History," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 11 (1980): 512.

5. Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Some Reflections on the New History," *American Historical Review* 94, no. 3 (June 1989): 662.

6. Malcolm Yapp, "More Enigma Than Statesman" (review article including Patrick Seale, *Asad: The Struggle for Syria,* and Moshe Ma'oz, *Asad: The Sphinx of Damascus*), *Times Literary Supplement,* November 4–10, 1988.

2. Traditional Islamic Learning and Ideas of the Person in the Twentieth Century

Arabic names and terms are transliterated from classical or spoken Arabic according to context. The author thanks Deborah Hodges for comments on this essay.

1. L. Carl Brown, *The Tunisia of Ahmad Bey, 1837–1855* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 161. See also E. Lévy-Provençal, *Les historiens des chorfa* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul

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